

IX

OF THE PREPARATIONS THAT WERE MADE FOR THE DISCOVERY, AND HOW THE INDIANS CAPTURED A SPANIARD

The governor and adelantado Hernando de Soto was not idle while these things were taking place among his people; rather he was fulfilling his office of captain and commander with all care and diligence, because as soon as the provisions and munitions were disembarked and placed in the pueblo of the cacique Hirrihigua—since it was nearest the Bay of Espíritu Santo—so that they might be close to the sea, he ordered that the seven largest of the eleven ships that he had brought should return to La Havana so that his wife, Doña Isabel de Bobadilla, might dispose of them, and that the four smaller ones remain for use in such navigation as they might have occasion to make. The vessels that remained were the ship *San Antón* and the caravel and the two brigantines, of which Captain Pedro Calderón was put in command. He had among other excellent qualifications that of having served when very young under the command and government of the great captain Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba. De Soto attempted with all diligence and care to win the cacique Hirrihigua to peace and friendliness, because it seemed to him that, according to the example set by this cacique, he might hope or fear what the other caciques of the region would do. He desired his friendship because he understood that with it he would gain that of all those of that kingdom, for he said that if that one, who had been so offended by the Castilians, should be reconciled and become their friend, would not the rest, who had not been offended, become so that much more quickly? Besides winning the friendship of the caciques, he hoped that his reputation and honor would be enhanced among Indians and Spaniards generally for having placated such a rabid enemy of his nation. Therefore whenever the Christians, in exploring the country, happened to take the vassals of Hirrihigua, he sent them with gifts and friendly messages, making amicable requests and enticing him with offers of satisfaction that he desired to give him for the injury done by Pánphilo de Narváez. The cacique not only refused to come out peaceably, but refused to accept the friendship of the Spaniards or even to reply a single word to any of the messages they sent him. He only said to the messengers that his injury did not admit of giving a favorable response, nor did the courtesy of that captain deserve that they give him an unfavor-

able one; and he never made any other reply to this proposal. But while the diligent efforts that the governor made to win the friendship of Hirrihigua did not suffice to gain the end and purpose that he desired, at least it served to mitigate to some extent the wrath and rancor this cacique felt against the Spaniards, as will be apparent in what we shall say presently.

The people in the service of the camp went out each day after grass for the horses, and there were accustomed to go continuously fifteen or twenty infantrymen and eight or ten cavalymen to guard and defend them. It happened one day that the Indians who were following these Spaniards in ambush fell upon them so suddenly and with such shouts and cries that they terrified them simply by their clamor, without using their arms. The Spaniards, who were careless and disordered, were thrown into confusion, and before they collected themselves the Indians were able to get into their hands a soldier named Grajales, with whom they went away, very well satisfied with having taken him and not attempting to inflict any further injury on the other Christians.

The Castilians finally got themselves in order, and one of them hastened to the camp on horseback, giving the alarm and news of what had happened. At his story, twenty horsemen, well armed, left the camp with all haste, and finding the trail of the Indians who were going away with the Spaniard, they followed it. At the end of two leagues' travel they reached a large canebrake that the Indians had chosen as a secluded and hidden place where they had their women and children concealed. All of them, large and small, with much festivity and rejoicing at the fine prize they had taken, were eating very contentedly, failing to consider that the Castilians would make such haste to recover one lost Spaniard. They told Grajales to eat and not be uneasy, that they would not give him the wretched life they had given to Juan Ortiz.

The women and children said the same thing to him, each of them offering him the food they had for themselves, begging him to eat it and to console himself, and saying that they would deal with him as a friend and companion.

Hearing the Indians, the Spaniards entered the canebrake, making a noise as of more people than were actually coming, in order to alarm those within it with their clatter so that they would not defend themselves.

Hearing the trampling of the horses, the Indians fled along the lanes they had made in every direction through the canebrake in order to enter and leave it. In the middle of the canebrake they had cleared a large space as a dwelling-place for the women and children, who remained in the power of

the Spaniards as slaves of him who shortly before had been theirs. So variable are the events of war and such is the inconstancy of its fortunes that there is recovered in a moment that which was held to be irretrievably lost, and in another is lost that which we believe to be safest.

Recognizing the voices of his people, Grajales went running out to receive them, giving thanks to God that they had delivered him so soon from his enemies. The Castilians scarcely knew him, because though the time of his imprisonment had been short the Indians had already stripped him and dressed him in no more than some trousers such as they wear. The Spaniards rejoiced with him, and gathering up all the people who were in the canebrake, who were women and children, went with them to the army where the governor received them with joy at their having recovered the Spaniard and, in freeing him, having captured so many of the enemy.

Grajales recounted immediately all that had happened to him and told how the Indians, when they came out of their ambuscade, had not desired to harm the Christians, because the arrows they had discharged had been more to intimidate them than to kill or wound them; that inasmuch as they had found them careless and off their guard, they could, if they liked, have killed most of them. And he said that as soon as they took him they were content and went without doing any other damage, leaving the rest of the Castilians; and that on the way and in the lodging in the canebrake they had treated him well, as had their women and children, speaking consoling words to him, and each of them offering him what they had to eat. The governor, learning of this, ordered brought before him the women, boys and children whom they had brought as prisoners and told them that he was much pleased at the good treatment they had accorded to the Spaniard, and at the friendly words that they had spoken to him, as a reward for which he was giving them their freedom so that they might go to their houses. And he charged them that thenceforth they should not flee from the Spaniards or stand in fear of them, but should communicate and deal with them as if they were all of the same nation; that he had not come there to mistreat the natives of the country, but to have them for friends and brothers; and that they were to tell this to their cacique and to their husbands, relatives and neighbors. Besides this cajolery, they gave them gifts and sent them away very contented with the kindness with which the general and all his people had treated them.

On two other occasions these same Indians later took two other Spaniards; one, named Hernando Vintimilla, was an expert seaman, and the other, Diego Muñoz, was a boy who was a page of Captain Pedro Calderón. They did not kill them or give them a miserable life as they had done with

Juan Ortiz, but allowed them to go about as freely as any Indian among them, so that later these two Christians, aided by their own cleverness, were able to escape from the power of the Indians in a ship that happened to be driven by a storm to that Bay of Espíritu Santo, as we shall tell below. In this way, with the fair words that the governor sent to say to the cacique Hirrihigua and with the good deeds that he did to his vassals, he forced him to mitigate and extinguish the fire of the anger and wrath against the Spaniards that he had in his heart. Kindness has such power that it even makes the fiercest of wild beasts change their original and natural savagery.

X

HOW THE DISCOVERY AND ENTRY OF THE SPANIARDS INTO THE INTERIOR COUNTRY IS BEGUN

Following these events, which took place in a little more than three weeks, the governor ordered Captain Baltasar de Gallegos to go with sixty lancers and as many more infantry, including harquebusiers, crossbowmen, and soldiers armed with shields [*rodeleros*], to explore the interior country, and they were to go as far as the chief pueblo of the cacique Urribarracuxi, which was the province nearest the two of Mucoço and Hirrihigua. The names of these provinces are not set down here because it is not known whether they were called by the name of the caciques or whether the caciques were called by the name of their lands, for we shall see below that in many parts of this great kingdom the lord and his province and its principal pueblo are called by the same name.

Captain Baltasar de Gallegos chose the same sixty lancers who had gone with him when he went in search of Juan Ortiz, and sixty more infantry. Juan Ortiz himself was among them, so that he might be their guide on the road and their interpreter among the Indians. Thus they went as far as the pueblo of Mucoço, who came out on the road to meet them, and he entertained and regaled them that night with much festivity and rejoicing at seeing them in his country. On the next day the captain asked him for an Indian to guide them to the pueblo of Urribarracuxi. Mucoço declined, saying that he begged him not to order him to do a thing against his own reputation and honor; that it would ill become him to furnish a guide to strangers against his own brother-in-law and brother. These would complain of him, with

much reason, for having sent enemies to their land and house; now that he was a friend and servant of the Spaniards, he wished to be so without prejudice to another or to his honor. He said further that even if Urribarracuxi were not his brother-in-law, as he was, but an entire stranger, he would do the same thing for him; and certainly he would do so, since he was so nearly related by marriage and proximity. He also begged him very earnestly that they should not attribute that opposition to lack of love for and unwillingness to serve the Spaniards, for he certainly would not refuse except in order to avoid doing an unworthy thing by which he would become known as a traitor to his country, relatives, neighbors and friends; and that it would seem bad to the Castilians themselves if in that case or another like it he should do what they asked him, though it might be in their service, because, in short, it was ill done. Therefore he said that he would sooner choose death than to do a thing unbecoming to him.

Juan Ortiz replied by order of Captain Baltasar de Gallegos, and said that they had no need of a guide to show them the road, as it was well known that the one they had followed thus far was the public highway, which passed beyond to the pueblo of his brother-in-law. They requested the Indian for a messenger who would go ahead to notify the cacique Urribarracuxi of the coming of the Spaniards, so that he might not be alarmed, fearing that they had the intention of doing him evil and harm; and so that his brother-in-law might believe the messenger, who as a friend would not deceive him, they desired that he might be one of his vassals and not a stranger, so that he would be more readily believed. He was to say to Urribarracuxi on behalf of the governor that he and all his people desired not to offend anyone, and on behalf of Captain Baltasar de Gallegos, who was the one who was going to his country, he was to advise him that he carried orders and express commands from the general that, even if Urribarracuxi did not desire peace and friendship with him and his soldiers, they were to maintain it with the cacique, not out of respect for him, whom they did not know and to whom they owed nothing, but out of love for Mucoço, whom the Spaniards and their captain-general desired to please, and through him all his relatives, friends, and neighbors, as they had done in the case of Hirrihigua, who though he had been and was very rebellious, had not received nor would he receive any injury.

Much gratified, Mucoço replied that he kissed the hands of the governor, as a son of the Sun and Moon, and of all his captains and soldiers, his fellows, many times, for the grace and kindness he did him with those words, which obligated him anew to die for them; that now that he knew why they

desired the guide he took great pleasure in giving one, and because it was fitting for both parties, he ordered that an Indian noble go who had been a great friend of Juan Ortiz in his past life. With him the Spaniards set out from the pueblo of Mucogo very happy and content, and still marveling to see that a barbarian should show such punctiliousness on all occasions.

In four days they went from the pueblo of Mucogo to that of his brother-in-law Urribarracuxi. From one pueblo to the other it was probably sixteen or seventeen leagues. They found it abandoned, for the cacique and all his vassals had gone to the forest in spite of the fact that the Indian friend of Juan Ortiz carried them the most affectionate message that it was possible to send them; and although after the Spaniards arrived in the pueblo he went back twice with the same message, the curaca neither wished to come out peaceably, nor to make war upon the Castilians, nor to give them an unfriendly reply. He excused himself with courteous words and with reasons that, though frivolous and vain, served his purpose.

This name *curaca* in the general language of the Indians of El Perú has the same meaning as cacique in the language of the island of Española and the neighboring ones, that is, lord of vassals. And while I am an Indian of El Perú and not of Santo Domingo or its environs, let me be permitted to introduce some words from my language in this, my work, so that it may be seen that I am a native of that land and of no other.

Throughout the twenty-five leagues that Baltasar de Gallegos and his companions marched from the pueblo of Hirrihigua to that of Urribarracuxi, they found many trees like those of Spain, there being wild grapevines, as we said above, walnuts, live oaks, mulberries, plums, pines and oaks. It was a pleasant and delightful country, which was divided between woodland and plain. There were some swamps, but they became fewer as one proceeded inland and left the seacoast.

Captain Baltasar de Gallegos sent four mounted men, among them being Gonzalo Silvestre, so that they might give this report of what they had seen to the governor, and state that there was food in that pueblo and its environs to sustain the army for some days. The four horsemen covered the twenty-five leagues that we mentioned in two days, without encountering anything worth recording on the journey. There we shall leave them in order to tell what happened in the camp meanwhile.



A Carved Wooden Bird on a Pedestal.
Florida's wetlands preserve many kinds of native artifacts that are ordinarily lost to decay. This carving probably served in a religious context. Similar items would have been encountered by De Soto's men as they advanced from town to town after the landing. (From the Fort Center Site, Glades County, Florida, courtesy of the Florida State Museum)

XI

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LIEUTENANT GENERAL ON GOING TO SEIZE A CURACA

One day while the governor was in the pueblo of Hirrihigua he received notice and certain information that the cacique had taken refuge in a forest not far from the army. The lieutenant general Vasco Porcallo de Figueroa, being a man so warlike and desirous of honor, wished to go for him in order to enjoy the glory of having brought him in, willingly or otherwise; and it was of no avail for the governor to attempt to prevent his journey, saying that he would send another captain. He desired to go himself, and thus he named the cavalry and infantry that he thought well to take with him and set out from the camp with great ostentation and greater hopes of bringing as a prisoner or making a friend of the curaca Hirrihigua. The latter, since he knew through his spies that the lieutenant general and many Castilians were coming to the place where he was, sent them a messenger saying that he begged them not to proceed farther, for he was in a secure place where they could not reach him however much they might try because of the many bad crossings of streams, swamps and forests that intervened. He therefore enjoined and begged them to return before some misfortune occur if they should enter some place from which they could not get out. He gave them this warning not out of fear that they would take him, but as a recompense and service for the kindness and favor they had done him in not having inflicted the harm and damage they could have done to his country and vassals.

The cacique Hirrihigua sent this message so many times that the messengers almost overtook one another, but the faster they came the more the lieutenant general desired to pass on, believing the contrary and persuaded that it was fear on the part of the curaca and not courtesy or any manner of friendship, and that he was so persistent with the messages because he could not escape him. These ideas hurried the march, serving as a spur to all who were with him, until they reached a large and dangerous swamp. Everyone raised difficulties about crossing it, yet Vasco Porcallo insisted that they enter it; and in order to inspire them by his example—for as an experienced soldier, which he was, he knew that there was no better way for a captain to be obeyed in difficulties than to go ahead of his soldiers (though this was rashness)—he spurred his horse and entered the swamp with a rush, and

many others came in after him. But after the lieutenant general had taken a few steps, his horse fell with him, and both were about to drown, for those on foot could not swim out to reach him quickly and aid him because of the slime and mud, and they would have sunk in the mire if they had walked; and those on horseback could not come to his assistance for the same reason, for all were equally in danger, except that Vasco Porcallo's was much greater, he being weighted down with arms and enveloped in the mud with one leg pinned beneath his horse, and so he was drowning without being able to help himself.

Vasco Porcallo escaped from this danger more through Divine mercy than through human assistance, and seeing himself covered with mud, and with his hopes of taking the cacique gone, and that the Indian, without coming out to fight with him in an armed encounter, had overcome him simply with messages sent through friendship (being beaten and ashamed of himself and full of grief and melancholy), he ordered his men to return. Inasmuch as to his anger at this misfortune was added the memory of his large possessions and the ease and pleasure he had left behind in his house, and the fact that he was no longer young and the larger part of his life was now past, that all or most of the hardships of that conquest were yet to come, such as those of that day, or even worse, and that he was under no obligation to incur them of his own accord, for those that he had passed through were sufficient, he thought it well to return to his house and leave that expedition to the young men who were taking part in it.

These ideas went with him all the way; sometimes he spoke of them to himself and sometimes aloud, repeating the names of the two curacas Hirrihigua and Urribarracuxi continually, separating them into syllables and changing some of their letters so that what he wished to deduce from them would come out more clearly. He would say: "Hurri Harri, Hurri Higa. Burra coja [literally, a lame she-ass; an insult of some impact—DB], Hurri Harri; I consign to the devil the country where the first names that I heard in it, and all the rest, are so vile and infamous; I hereby aver ["Voto a tal," literally, "I swear to such"; a euphemism—DB] that from such princes there cannot be expected good middles or ends, nor from such omens favorable events. Let him work who must in order to live or to gain honor; I have more than enough property and honor for my lifetime and even after it."

With these words and other similar ones, repeated many times, he reached the army and at once asked the governor's permission to return to the island of Cuba. The governor granted it with the same liberality and graciousness with which he had received his offer for the conquest, and

along with the permission he gave him the little galleon *San Antón*, in which he left.

Vasco Porcallo divided among the gentlemen and soldiers, as he saw fit, the arms and horses and other equipment and household service of very fine and excellent quality that he had brought, being such a wealthy and noble personage. He ordered left for the use of the army all the provisions and ship-stores he had brought from his house for himself and his family. He gave orders that a natural son of his, named Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, whom he had by an Indian woman in Cuba, should remain to accompany the governor on the expedition; he left him two horses and arms and the other things needed for the conquest. The latter conducted himself throughout as a very excellent gentleman and soldier, a worthy son of such a father, serving very readily on all the occasions that offered, and after the Indians killed his horses he always went on foot, not wishing to accept from the general or any other personage the loan or gift of a horse or any other present or favor, although he might be wounded and in great need. It seemed to him that all the gifts that they made and offered were not sufficient return for the services and benefits conferred by his father upon the whole army in general and upon individuals, whereupon the governor was distressed and desirous of pleasing and gratifying this gentleman, but his nature was so strange and distant that he was never willing to accept anything from anyone.

XII

THE REPORT THAT BALTASAR DE GALLEGOS SENT OF WHAT HE HAD DISCOVERED

The things that we have told being concluded in a very brief time, Vasco de Porcallo embarked and took with him all the Spaniards, Indians, and Negroes whom he had brought for his own service. The impression that he left with the whole army was not of cowardice, for it did not enter into his nature, but of his inconstancy, just as when he offered himself for the conquest in the island of Cuba he had left the impression of excessive ambition, through abandoning his house, property, and ease for new things, without any necessity for them. Always in serious matters, the decisions made imprudently and without consultation with friends are apt to give rise to des-

perate repentance, with evil and injury and much dishonor for him who acts so. If this gentleman had reflected before he left his house upon that which he reflected when he was returning to it, he would not have been censured as he was, nor he himself troubled by the belittling and loss of his reputation and waste of his property, which he could have employed in this expedition with more prudence and better counsel and with more credit and honor to himself. But who can subdue a wild beast or give counsel to the free and powerful, confident of themselves and persuaded that in proportion to worldly treasures they have those of the spirit, and that the same advantage that fortune gave them over other men in the property that the latter do not gain, it bestows upon them in discretion and wisdom, which they do not learn? Therefore they neither ask advice nor wish to receive it, nor can they heed those who are ready to give it.

On the day following the departure of Vasco Porcallo there arrived at the army the four horsemen whom Baltasar de Gallegos sent with a report of what he had seen and heard of the lands they had traversed. They reported very fully and much to the satisfaction of the Spaniards, because everything they said was favorable to their pretension and conquest, with one exception. They said that in front of the pueblo of Uribarracuxi there was an extremely large swamp, very difficult to pass. Everyone was joyful at the good news, and with regard to the swamp they replied that God had given man ingenuity and skill to overcome and pass through the difficulties that arose before him.

With this report the governor ordered a proclamation issued to the effect that preparations be made to march at the end of three days. He also ordered that Gonzalo Silvestre, with twenty more cavalry, return to advise Baltasar de Gallegos that the army would follow him on the fourth day.

Since the governor had to go away from the pueblo of Hirrihigua, it was necessary to leave a presidio and garrison to defend and guard the arms, provisions and munitions belonging to the army, for he had brought large quantities of all these things, and also in order that the caravel and the two brigantines that were in the bay should not be abandoned. He therefore named Captain Pedro Calderón to remain as land and sea commander, in charge of everything pertaining to both that remained. For their defense and protection, he left forty lancers and eighty infantrymen (exclusive of the sailors on the three vessels), with orders that they remain in that place, not moving to any other, until he should send them new orders, and that they should always endeavor to keep peace with the Indians of the vicinity and on no account to commit hostilities, even though they might suffer many af-

fronts from them; and in particular they were to regale and maintain all friendly relations with Mucoço.

This order given, which Captain Pedro Calderón observed like a good captain and soldier, the governor left the Bay of Espíritu Santo and the pueblo of Hirrihigua and marched toward that of Mucoço, which he sighted on the morning of the third day of his march. Mucoço, who knew of his coming, went out to receive him with many tears and regrets at his departure, and begged him to remain that day in his pueblo. Not desiring to bother him with so many people, the governor told him that it was more convenient for him to go on, because he had each day's march set; he commended him to God and assigned to him as vassals the captain and soldiers who remained in the pueblo of Hirrihigua, thanking him anew for what he had done for him, his army, and Juan Ortiz. He embraced him with much tenderness and signs of great affection, which the goodness of this famous Indian merited. The latter kissed the governor's hands, with many tears, though he tried to keep them back, and among other expressions he used to show his grief at his absence he said that he could not tell which had been greater, his satisfaction at having known him and acknowledged him as lord, or his sorrow at seeing him leave without being able to follow his lordship, whom he begged, as a last favor, to remember him. Having taken leave of the general, he spoke to the rest of the captains and principal gentlemen and told them in fitting terms of the sorrow and solitude in which they were leaving him, and desired that the Sun direct and prosper them in all their actions. With this, the good Mucoço stopped, and the governor proceeded on his journey to the pueblo of Urribarracuxi without anything worthy of note occurring on the road.

From the Bay of Espíritu Santo to the pueblo of Urribarracuxi they traveled always to the northeast, that is, toward the north, bearing a little in the direction of the sunrise. With regard to this direction and all the rest that are stated in this *History*, it is to be noted that they are not to be taken as literally correct, in order that I may not be blamed if something else should prove to be true in the future when that country shall be won, God willing. Although I made every possible effort to set them down with certainty, I was unable to do so, because as the chief purpose of these Castilians was to conquer the land and seek gold and silver, they gave no attention to anything except gold and silver. Therefore they failed to do other things more important to them than marking out the confines of the land, and this is sufficient to excuse me for not having written with the certainty that I have wished and that was necessary.

XIII

THEY FAIL TWICE TO CROSS THE GREAT SWAMP, AND THE GOVERNOR GOES TO SEEK A PASSAGE, AND FINDS IT

Having arrived at the pueblo of Urribarracuxi, where Captain Baltasar de Gallegos was awaiting him, the governor sent messengers to the cacique, who was concealed in the woods, offering him friendship, but no effort was sufficient to make him come out peaceably. Seeing this, the governor left the Indian alone and busied himself in sending scouts in three directions, who went to find a passage through the swamp, which was three leagues from the pueblo and was large and very difficult to cross, for it was a league in breadth and contained a great deal of very deep mud (for which reason they call it a swamp), up to the very edge. Two-thirds of the swamp, on either side, were of mud, and the other third, in the center, was of water so deep that it could not be forded; but with all these difficulties the explorers found a crossing. They returned eight days after they had left, with news of having found it, and a very good one. With this report the governor and all his men set out from the pueblo and in two days reached the crossing of the swamp and passed over it easily, for the crossing was good; but because the swamp was so wide, they spent a whole day in passing through it. Half a league beyond the swamp they stationed themselves on a fine plain, and on the following day the same scouts, having gone out to see which way they must travel, returned saying that it was entirely impossible to go farther because of the many swamps along the streams that led out of the great swamp and inundated the flat country. This was the reason why the swamp was easily passed at the crossing of which we have told, because a great deal of water flowed out of the main body above the crossing, which facilitated the safe passage of the great swamp and made it very difficult to travel through the country. For this reason the governor wished to discover the road for himself, because if he himself could not find a way in the dangerous and difficult passes, he would not be satisfied with [sending] another. With this determination he again crossed to the other side of the swamp, and choosing a hundred cavalry and a hundred infantry to go with him, he left the rest of the army where it was with the *maese de campo* and marched three days up the swamp along one side of it, sending out scouts at intervals to see if some crossing could be found.

In all these three days there was no lack of Indians who, coming out of the woods along the edge of the swamp, assailed the Spaniards with arrows and then retreated to the woods; but some remained trapped, dead, or captured. In order to free themselves from the importunity and molestation of the Spaniards in questioning them about the road and crossing of the swamp, the prisoners offered to guide them, and as they were enemies, they led and put them into difficult passes and places where there were Indians in ambush, who came out to discharge arrows at the Christians. As soon as the Spanish perceived their malice they took four of them and threw them to the dogs, who killed them. Therefore one of the captured Indians, fearing death, offered to guide them faithfully, and taking them out of the bad passes through which they were traveling, he put them on a clear, plain and wide road, apart from the swamp. Having marched along it for four leagues, they turned back toward the swamp where they found a crossing that was free of mud at the entrance and exit, and the waters of which could be forded about breast-deep for the distance of a league except in the middle of the channel, which for a space of a hundred paces could not be forded because of its great depth. Here the Indians had made a poor sort of bridge of two large trees that had fallen into the water, and the space they did not cover was bridged over with large timbers fastened together and other smaller stakes laid athwart in the form of a balustrade. Pánphilo de Narváez had made this same crossing ten years before with his unhappy army.

Much pleased at having found this crossing, Governor Hernando de Soto summoned two soldiers, natives of the island of Cuba and mestizos, for thus throughout the West Indies they call us who are children of a Spaniard and an Indian woman or of an Indian and a Spanish woman. The children of a Negro and an Indian woman or of an Indian and a Negro woman they call *mulatos*, as in Spain. The Negroes give the name *criollos* to the children of Spanish men and women and to the children of Negro men and women who are born in the Indies, to signify that they are born there, as distinguished from those who go from here, Spain. The Spaniards have now introduced this word *criollo* into their language, giving it the same meaning as the Negroes. In the same way they call *cuarterón* or *cuatratno* him who is one-fourth part Indian, as the son of a Spaniard and a mestiza or of a mestizo and a Spanish woman. The native of Guinea they call simply a Negro, and the Spaniard by what he is. They have all these names in the Indies to apply to the intrusive nations who are not natives.

As we were saying, the governor ordered the two islanders, whose names were Pedro Morón and Diego de Oliva, both very expert swimmers, to take

axes and cut some branches to be placed crosswise on the bridge, and to do everything that they thought would contribute to the convenience of those who had to cross over it. The two soldiers carried out their orders with all promptness, and while they were most busily engaged therein they saw some canoes emerge with Indians who had been concealed among the many reeds and rushes that are along the margins of that swamp; they were coming at top speed to shoot arrows at them. The mestizos dived headlong from the bridge and stayed under water until they came up where their companions were, slightly wounded, for because they had been under water, the arrows had not penetrated very far. After making this assault, the Indians withdrew from the pass and went where they did not see them again. The Spaniards repaired the bridge without being troubled further, and three harquebus-shots above that crossing they found another very good one for the horses.

Having found the passes he desired for crossing the swamp, the governor thought it well to give information of them immediately to Luis de Moscoso, his *maese de campo*, so that he might march after him with the army, and also in order that as soon as he should receive the news he might send him a supply of biscuit and cheese, because the people whom he had with him were in need of food, as they had brought few provisions, not having intended going so far. The governor therefore called Gonzalo Silvestre and in the presence of everyone said to him: "There fell to your lot by chance the best horse in our whole army, and it means greater toil for you, because we have to entrust [to you] the most difficult tasks that present themselves to us. Therefore have patience and mark that our lives and our conquest require that you return tonight to the camp and tell Luis de Moscoso what you have seen, and how we have found a passage through the swamp. He is to march at once after us with all the men, and as soon as you arrive he is to send you back with two loads of biscuits and cheese upon which we can subsist until we find food, for we are feeling the need of it. And so that you may return more safely than you go, you are to order him to assign thirty lancers to guard you on the road. I will wait for you in this same place until tomorrow night, when you are to return here, and although the road may seem long and difficult to you, and the time short, I know to whom I am entrusting this affair. In order that you may not go alone, take anyone you choose for a companion and go immediately, as it will be well for you to arrive in the camp by dawn so that the Indians may not kill you if daylight should overtake you before you are through the swamp."

Gonzalo Silvestre, without replying a word, left the governor and mounted his horse. On the road as he went he met one Juan López Cacho

from Sevilla, a page of the governor who had a good horse, and he said to him: "The general orders that you and I go with a message from him to the camp, by dawn; therefore follow me at once, for I am on my way." Juan López replied, saying: "By your life, take someone else! For I am tired and cannot go there." Gonzalo Silvestre answered: "The governor ordered me to choose a companion and I choose you; if you want to come, come and welcome, and if you want to stay, well and good. Our going together does not lessen the danger, nor does my going alone increase the hardship." So saying, he spurred his horse and continued on his way. Juan López, in spite of himself, mounted his horse and went after him. They left the place where the governor was at sunset, both youths, scarcely more than twenty years old.

XIV

WHAT THE TWO SPANIARDS EXPERIENCED ON THEIR JOURNEY UNTIL THEY ARRIVED AT THE CAMP

These two valiant and spirited Spaniards not only did not flee from hardship, though they found it quite excessive, nor fear danger, though it was so imminent, but with all readiness and promptness, as we have seen, they exposed themselves to both, and thus they traveled the first four or five leagues without any trouble whatever because the road was clear, without woods, swamps or streams, and in this distance they heard no Indians. But as soon as they had passed over it, they encountered the difficulties and bad passes they had found on going in, with deep miry places, woods, and streams that issued from the great swamp and turned to re-enter it. They could not avoid these difficult places because, as there was no open road and as they did not know the country, in order not to lose their way they were forced to return following the same trail that they had made three days before on their way in. They traveled only by the landmarks that they recognized as having seen and noted on going in.

The risk these two companions ran of being killed by the Indians was so evident that no effort they could make would have sufficed to save them from it if God in His mercy had not succored them, by means of the natural instincts of the horses. They, as if they had understanding, began at once to follow the trail they had taken on going in, putting their noses to ground like

hounds or setters in order to find and follow the road; and although at first their masters pulled at the reins, not understanding the intention of the horses, they would not raise their heads, still seeking the trail. And when they lost it, in order to find it they gave some loud sniffs and snorts that greatly alarmed their masters, who feared that the Indians would hear them. Gonzalo Silvestre's horse was better at following the trail and at finding it when they lost it. But we should not wonder at this excellence nor at many others that this horse exhibited, because he was marked out naturally by signs and color as extremely good for both peace and war. He was dark chestnut, pitch-colored, with a white left foot and a matching mark on the forehead, signs that in horses of all colors promise more goodness and loyalty than any others, whether they be jades or hacks; and the chestnut, especially pitch-colored, is good above all others for work and sport, for mud and dust. Juan López Cacho's horse was a toast-colored bay, which they call *zorruno*, with black mane and tail, extremely good but not equal in excellence to the chestnut, who guided his master and his companion. Having recognized the intention and goodness of his horse when he lowered his head to find and follow the road, Gonzalo Silvestre gladly left him alone without opposing him in any way, for they got on better thus. With these difficulties and others that can be better imagined than written, these two brave Spaniards traveled without a road all night, perishing from hunger, since for two days past they had not eaten anything except stalks of maize that the Indians had planted. They were also overcome with sleep and fatigued with labor, as were the horses, they not having been unsaddled for three days and barely having had their bridles taken off so that they could eat a little. But seeing death before their eyes if they did not overcome these hardships gave them strength to go on. On either side as they traveled they left behind large bands of Indians, who by the light of the many fires they had built seemed to be dancing, leaping and singing, eating and drinking, with much joy and merriment and a great deal of talking and shouting among themselves, which kept up all night. Whether they were celebrating some of their heathen festivals or talking of the people newly arrived in their country is not known, but the cries and shouts the Indians gave in their rejoicing meant safety and life to the two Spaniards who were passing among them, because in the midst of their great confusion and hilarity they did not hear the horses pass nor pay attention to the loud barking of their dogs, which, hearing them go by, were raising a frantic hue and cry. All of which was a Divine providence, for if it had not been for this noise on the part of

the Indians and the trailing of the horses, it would have been impossible to travel one league, much less twelve, among all those dangers without their being heard and killed.

Having traveled more than ten leagues with the difficulty that we have seen, Juan López said to his companion: "Either let me sleep awhile, or kill me with a lance-thrust on this road; I cannot go farther or stay on my horse, for I am dying for sleep." Gonzalo Silvestre, who had already twice refused him the same request, overcome by his importunity, said to him: "Get down and sleep if you like, but just because you cannot stay awake an hour longer you will have the Indians kill us. Considering the distance we have come, the crossing of the swamp cannot be far away, and it would be well for us to pass through it before daylight, for if day overtakes us here it will be impossible to escape death."

Without waiting for any more argument, Juan López Cacho fell on the ground like a dead man, and his companion took his lance and his horse's reins. At that hour a great darkness overspread everything, and with it came so much water from the sky that it seemed to be a deluge, but however much it rained on Juan López it did not wake him, for the power that sleep has over the human body is extremely great, and as such a necessary ailment it cannot be denied.

The rain ceased, the clouds passed away, and clear daylight appeared all in a moment, so much so that Gonzalo Silvestre blamed himself for not having seen the day dawn, but it might be that he had slept on horseback also, as did his comrade on the ground. I knew one gentleman (among others) who in traveling went three or four leagues while asleep, without waking or paying attention when they spoke to him, and at times he was thereby in great danger of being dragged on the ground by his pack animal. As soon as Gonzalo Silvestre saw the daylight so clearly, he hurriedly called Juan López, and because the hoarse, low, and quiet calls that he gave were not sufficient to awaken him, he made use of the butt-end of the lance and roused him with several good strokes, saying to him: "See what your sleepiness has caused us; look at the full daylight, which we feared, and which has caught us where we cannot escape death at the hands of our enemies."

Juan López mounted his horse, and they traveled with all haste at a faster gait than pacing, going at a canter, the horses being so good that they could stand both the past work and the present. By daylight the two horsemen could not avoid being seen by the Indians, and in a moment an alarm and outcry was raised, warning being sent from one side of the swamp to the other with such a buzz and clamor and resounding of conch shells,

trumpets, drums, and other rude instruments that it seemed they wished to kill them with the noise alone.

At the same moment so many canoes appeared on the water, coming out from between the reeds and rushes, that these Spaniards, in imitation of the poetic fables, said that they looked like nothing so much as the leaves of the trees, which on falling into the water were converted into canoes. The Indians assembled so rapidly and swiftly at the crossing of the swamp that when the Christians reached it they were already waiting for them on the high ground.

The two companions, though they saw the imminent peril that after so much hardship undergone on land, was awaiting them in the water, considering that fear would make it greater and more certain than would daring, threw themselves at it with great force and boldness, without heeding anything except making haste to pass over that league that, as we have said, was the breadth of this bad swamp. It was God's will that, since the horses were covered with water and the riders well armed, all came out safely without wounds, which was no small miracle in view of the infinite number of arrows that they had shot at them. One of them, telling later of the mercy the Lord had shown them, particularly at this place, in that they had not killed or wounded them, said that, after coming out of the water, he had turned around to see what remained there and saw it as thickly covered with arrows as a street would be with rushes on some great and solemn festival day.

In the little that we have told about these two Spaniards, and in other similar cases we shall note later, may be seen the bravery of the Spanish nation, which, undergoing so many and such great hardships and others even more severe, which through their negligence have not been recorded, won the New World for their prince—a fortunate acquisition for both Indians and Spaniards, for the latter gained temporal wealth and the former spiritual.

The Spaniards who were with the army, hearing such a strange shouting and uproar among the Indians and suspecting what it might be, assembled with all haste, and more than thirty horsemen went out to the relief of the passage of the swamp.

Nuño Tovar was well in the lead of all of them, running full speed on a most handsome horse, a bright dappled gray, with such wildness and dash on the part of the horse and such an expression of intrepidity on the face of the rider that simply by the gallantry and nobility of his person, as such a fine figure of a horseman, he could reassure the two companions who were in such danger.

Although in disfavor with his captain-general, this good gentleman did not fail to show on all occasions his personal prowess and courageous spirit, always doing his duty in order to comply with the obligation and debt he owed to his own nobility. Disdain with all its power could never subdue him and make him do otherwise; generosity of spirit never permits depravity in those who truly possess it. To this the princes and the powerful who are tyrants, when, with or without reason, they become offended, rarely or never respond with the reconciliation and pardon such persons deserve. It seems rather that they become more and more offended as they dwell on their virtue; therefore he who finds himself in such a case, in my opinion and poor judgment, if he has nothing to eat should go beg it for the love of God rather than persist in their service, because whatever miracles he may perform in it will not suffice to restore him to their favor.

XV

THIRTY LANCERS GO OUT AFTER THE GOVERNOR WITH THE SUPPLY OF BISCUITS

Although they saw the two Spaniards come out of the water, the Indians did not cease pursuing them by land, shooting many arrows at them in the great anger they felt at their having traveled so many leagues without their people hearing them; but as soon as they saw Nuño Tovar and the rest of the horsemen who were coming to their aid, they left them and returned to the woods and the swamp in order not to be run down by the horses, as they could not sustain an engagement with them in the open field.

The two companions were received by their people with great pleasure and rejoicing, and much more so when they saw that they had not been wounded. The *maese de campo* Luis de Moscoso, learning of the general's order, prepared the thirty horsemen to return immediately with Gonzalo Silvestre, who scarcely took time to breakfast on two mouthfuls of half-matured maize cooked on the ear and a little cheese they gave him, as there was nothing else, for the whole camp was suffering from hunger. They took two pack mules laden with biscuits and cheese, a scanty enough provision for so many people if God had not provided another source, as we shall see later. Gonzalo Silvestre set out with these supplies and his thirty companions within an hour after he arrived at the camp. Juan López remained there, saying that the general had not ordered him either to return or to come.

The thirty mounted men crossed the swamp without opposition from the Indians, and although they brought men from the army to help them in the crossing, there was no necessity for it. They marched all that day without seeing the enemy, and notwithstanding the haste that they made they were unable to reach the place where the governor told them he would await them until two hours after dark. They found that the general had crossed the swamp and pressed forward, at which they were much disturbed, finding themselves thirty men alone in the midst of so many enemies as they feared were surrounding them. Because they did not know where the governor had gone, they did not follow him. They agreed to remain in the same camp that he had made on the previous night, adopting among themselves the plan that ten of them would make the rounds on horseback the first third of the night, another ten would stand watch with their horses saddled and bridled, with the reins in their hands in order to be able to go quickly wherever it might be necessary to fight, and the remaining ten would have their horses saddled but not bridled, and allow them to eat, so that in this manner, working and resting by turns, they could undergo their nocturnal toil. Thus the whole night passed, without any sign of the enemy.

As soon as daylight came, seeing the trail that the governor had left through the swamp, they passed on, experiencing good fortune in that the Indians had not occupied it in order to oppose their passage. It would have been a great hardship for them to have made it fighting in water breast-deep, without being able to attack or flee and having no missile weapons with which to keep the enemy at a distance; they, on the other hand, having great facility for going and coming in their canoes against our people and shooting arrows at them from a distance or at close range. Certainly on this occasion and on other similar ones the *History* will recount, one is moved to consider what might be the reason why the same Indians, in the same places and circumstances, on some days should fight with such eagerness and desire to kill the Castilians and on others pay no attention to them. I can give no other reason except that in fighting or not fighting they would be obliged to observe some of their heathen superstitions, as some nations did in the time of the great Julius Caesar, or that, seeing that the Spaniards were passing on and did not stop in their country, they let them alone. However it might be, the thirty horsemen accepted it as a piece of good luck and followed the governor's trail. Having marched six leagues, they found him encamped in some very beautiful valleys having large maize fields, so productive that each stalk had three or four ears, some of which they gathered while mounted on their horses, in order to appease their hunger. They ate them raw, giving thanks to

God, our Lord, for having succored them with such abundance, for to the needy anything seems a great deal.

The governor received them very well, and with generous words and much praise he commended the good work that Gonzalo Silvestre had done and the great danger and insupportable hardships that he had undergone. He said finally that he could not humanly have done more; he offered to reward such merit in the future, and on the other hand he asked his pardon for not having waited for him, as he had failed to do, saying by way of excuse that he had passed on, first, because the hunger they were experiencing could not be endured, and second, because he had little hope of his returning in view of the great risk that he ran, and that he had feared the Indians might have killed him.

This very fertile province where the thirty horsemen found the governor was called Acuera, and its lord had that same name.¹ The latter, learning of the arrival of the Castilians in his country, fled to the woods with all his people. From the province of Urribarracuxi to that of Acuera it is about twenty leagues, on a north-south line.

Having received the general's order, the *maese de campo* Luis de Moscoso immediately, on that same day, set the army in motion. They crossed the swamp easily, finding no opposition from the enemy, and continued their march. In three days they reached the other crossing of the same swamp, and as that ford was wider and carried more water than the other, they spent three days in crossing it, during which time, and in the twelve leagues they marched along the edge of the swamp, they did not see a single Indian. This was no small favor that they [the Indians] did them, for the crossings being so difficult in themselves, however little opposition they might have given them, it would have greatly increased their troubles.

While Luis de Moscoso was crossing the swamp, the governor, because his people were suffering from hunger, sent him a great deal of Indian corn

¹In Rangel's account, Acuera was bypassed on the way to Ocale. Further, between Garcilaso's Acuera and Apalache it is difficult to reconcile the Inca's account with those of the other chroniclers. There is some disagreement on how best to correlate the conflicting itineraries. John R. Swanton believed that the Inca's misplaced Acuera equates with the Ocale (or Cale) of Rangel and Elvas, and that the Inca transplanted the name *Ocali* to the next province, Potano. John H. Hann, in contrast, prefers to stand by Garcilaso's *Ocali* as identical to the Ocale of the others. By Hann's reconstruction, the Potano province is altogether omitted in *La Florida*. John R. Swanton, *Final Report of the United States De Soto Expedition Commission* (Washington: U.S.G.P.O., 1939 [76th Cong., 1st sess., House. Doc. 71]), 144; John H. Hann, "De Soto, Dobyns, and Demography in Western Timucua," *The Florida Anthropologist* 43 (1990):3-4.